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Officials expect rise in homelessness

By Robert Rogers
Staff Writer

A lot of people can enter the ranks of the homeless in four years.

At least that's what organizers of the Community Action Partnership's county-wide homeless census think going into today's round of counting.

"That's what our gut is telling us, based on a lot of factors, of course," said Executive Director Patricia Nickols. "The number of residents without housing is almost surely up — what we're looking for is how much."

Up is disconcerting enough, organizers say, given the 2003 numbers. Since then, a sluggish job market and torpid wage growth coupled with explosive home prices and rental rates over the last four years have

2003 SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS

Daily population of homeless: 5,270-8,351

Persons who experience homelessness sometime during the year: 14,861-23,549

Ratio of women to total homeless: 25 percent

Ratio of those who are part of homeless family: 21 percent

Ratio of children to total homeless: 14 percent

Ethnic breakdown of homeless: 52 percent white; 20 percent black; 20 percent Latino; 3 percent American Indian; 5 percent other

made a perfect storm for increasing homelessness, Nickols said.

The census survey now under way could put San Bernardino County among the front-runners to receive competitive U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development grants to combat extreme poverty

through myriad programs.

The Homeless Coalition does not provide direct homeless services, but provides information, referral, advocacy and support to homeless-service providers.

It serves as the countywide representative to the annual Application for Homeless Funding from HUD. Since 1997, more than \$38 million has been obtained for homeless services in the county, according to the coalition's Web site. The money is distributed to various service providers, including shelters and drug-treatment programs.

The numbers from this survey will likely be released this summer, organizers said. Over the next two weeks, data-gatherers will conduct head counts on the streets and in area shelters and will administer a survey to 600 homeless people.